

# Peggy Welch

Indiana State Representative, District 60



Representative  
**Peggy  
Welch**

Spring, 2003

Dear Friends,

Your Indiana General Assembly legislators have been busy. In January we filed 1,042 bills in the House and Senate. The first of March we passed 324 bills from the House and 196 were passed in the Senate. We are now in the process of considering the other chamber's bills. Then later in April, we will move to the conference committee stage. It is during this time that differences in the House and Senate versions of a bill are resolved. So you can see that we still have a long way to go before we adjourn on April 29th.

The only thing that we are constitutionally required to do is pass a budget. Inside is more information on the budget bill. Also, inside is information on the Energize Indiana program. The budget bill is our short-term answer to our economic situation. Last summer's tax restructuring bill and this session's Energize Indiana are our answers for long-term economic growth.

I appreciate the many ideas for legislation brought to me by individuals and groups. I contributed to that number of bills that were introduced by filing 42 bills of my own. Fourteen of those bills passed the House and are now eligible for consideration in the Senate. These bills cover issues such as home inspectors, breastfeeding, conservancy districts, insurance discounts for older drivers, technology accessibility for the disabled, county revenue sharing, car child restraints, and physician assistant practice. I am working to make sure that all of them will get a committee hearing in the Senate, but realistically several will not make it through the process. My Senate colleagues asked me to sponsor 11 of their bills—that is shepherd their bills through the House process. A few of the issues addressed by those bills are: child care, stroke prevention, Medicaid estate recovery, streamline sales tax, cloning, and open alcohol containers in vehicles.

The message is that you should stay tuned! Through the legislative process, bills can change significantly before they are enacted into law. If you have questions about any bill, please feel free to contact me. Also, you may go to Access Indiana to learn the status of legislation at [www.in.gov/legislative](http://www.in.gov/legislative).

Again, stay tuned!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Welch".

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## House passes Welch plan to increase child safety in motor vehicles

I am very pleased that the Indiana House members approved a bill that I authored to make it safer for children to ride in motor vehicles. House Bill 1434 requires that 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds be in federally approved child restraint systems, such as booster seats. Child safety advocates, including pediatricians, brought the idea for this bill to me. The number one killer of children between the ages of 0 and 14 is vehicular crashes.

Seat belts were designed for adult men. Seat belts do not properly fit children, thus they do not effectively protect them in a crash. As noted by a state policeman, "Putting a child into a seat belt is like putting an adult suit of clothes on a child. They just don't fit."

If passed into law, violations of child restraint system laws will be a Class C infraction, which carries a fine of up to \$500. Per the law, fines will not be collected if the ticketed person shows possession of a federally approved child restraint system. If any fines are collected, they will be deposited into a special fund, into which grants and donations will also be deposited. These funds will be used to help families who need assistance in acquiring child restraint systems. If you have questions about proper placement of a car or booster seat or you need assistance, you may call Bloomington Hospital at 353-9342.



Rep. Welch with Krista Baker and her sons of Terre Haute. Based on personal experience, Krista and her sons testified on the importance of HB 1434.

## Energize Indiana plan creates jobs, protects workers

The budget bill is our response to our current economic picture. It is easy to just continually react to our economy every two years. However, as legislative leaders, it is also our responsibility to plan for the future and invest in programs that will bring eventual prosperity to Indiana. The tax-restructuring bill of the 2002 special session began that process. This session's Energize Indiana continues that investment.

Energize Indiana is a 10-year initiative that focuses on diversifying our state's economy by creating high-skill, high wage jobs. Energize Indiana will help provide workers with the new skills they need, plus assist businesses get started and be successful.

Some features of the plan are:

- Start-up funding for new and emerging high-tech companies that provide high-wage jobs.
- Increased funding for research of new agricultural products and a pilot program for economic develop-

ment in rural areas.

- Committee to guide the state's economic development efforts and a commission to improve state efficiency and reduce waste.
- Income tax credit for students who attend Indiana higher education institutions, stay in Indiana and work in life sciences, advanced manufacturing, information technology or logistics.
- Federal funds to modernize the state unemployment insurance system and provide skills assessments for Hoosier workers.

Thirty-five percent of the Tobacco Settlement money is proposed to be used to fund these programs that will provide economic health for our state. Please know that the funding for the health programs, such as Hoosier Rx, smoking prevention, and community health centers, is protected and not used for Energize Indiana initiatives.



## Highlights of the proposed budget

In mid March, the House passed its \$23 billion version of the two-year budget for 2004 and 2005. The budget process begins with the Ways and Means Committee, of which I am a member. We drafted the budget based on the testimony we heard from agencies and the state revenue numbers that we had at the time of drafting. HB 1001, the budget bill, is now being considered by the Senate. It is expected that the Senators will make changes based on their priorities, which may be different than House members. Also, the Senators will have access to an economic forecast in April. The forecast is a calculated prediction of what the state's income will be over the next two years. It is everyone's hope that the forecast will be positive, which then will allow us to better fund schools, universities, roads, and health care. Once the Senate passes its version of the budget bill, it will go to conference committee, where negotiators from both chambers will produce a bill that is the result of cooperation and compromise.

Below are a few of the features of the House passed version of the budget bill:

**K-12 Education:** Tuition support receives a minimum guaranteed increase of 1.75 percent. Funds are provided to protect the Indiana Technology Fund for libraries.

**Higher Education:** Previous budget cuts are restored in 2004 and a small increase is given in 2005. Student financial assistance is increased. There is some funding provision for campus maintenance. The budget bill authorizes the construction of a limited number of university building projects across the state.

**Medicaid:** Funding is frozen at the 2003 levels. We recognize that this is a problem because with the economic downturn, the state has seen an increase in the number of people who qualify for healthcare assistance.

**Corrections:** The construction of new prison wings was not authorized. Increased use of alternative sentencing and transition programs is encouraged.

**Miscellaneous:** Funding for CHOICE, Project Safe Place, domestic violence programs, and Youth Services Bureaus was maintained.



Rep. Welch with Amanda Chapman, her legislative assistant, and Angela Hoover, her session intern. Amanda and Angela are glad to help you with any questions or problems. You may contact them at 800-382-9842 or 317/232-9991.



## Crane honored by House of Representatives

Rep. Welch with representatives of Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center and the Southern Indiana Business Alliance. Rep. Welch introduced a resolution honoring Crane employees whose accomplishments were recognized by President Bush. Rep. Welch also introduced a resolution expressing the Indiana General Assembly's support of Crane as a vital link in the defense of our country.



# Stay in touch with Representative Welch

## Follow legislation online

If you are interested in a particular piece of legislation, follow its progress online at [www.in.gov/legislative](http://www.in.gov/legislative). You may search by bill number or subject matter, and see the status of the bill as well as read the actual text online.

To see the bills I'm working on this session, visit my Website at [www.in.gov/H60](http://www.in.gov/H60) and click on *Bills*. I am happy to answer any questions or concerns you have about the bills I have authored or sponsored, or any other bill being debated during this session. Send an e-mail to me at [H60@in.gov](mailto:H60@in.gov) or call 1-800-382-9842.

## Free publications available

The House of Representatives offers a variety of free publications as a public service. You may request information on higher education, state agencies, grants, prescription drug discount programs, women's health, or booklets relevant to young Hoosiers or senior citizens. To request a particular publication, click on *Publications* on my Website, contact me by e-mail, or call the toll-free number given above.



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**Peggy Welch**

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